

Network

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS

VOLUME I, No. 1 NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS PROGRAM, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SPRING, 1998

Grants-in-Aid Proposed for Threatened NHLs

The President's FY 1999 Budget proposes a \$2.7 million increase to the Historic Preservation Fund for Grants-In-Aid to Protect Threatened National Historic Landmarks.

Pending Congressional action, these funds would provide a much-needed source of funds to preserve these most significant examples of our national heritage.

The President's budget marks the first time funds have been proposed specifically for this purpose. Section 101(e) (3) (i) of the National Historic Preservation Act directs the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with appropriate State Historic Preservation Officers, to administer a program of direct grants "for the preservation of National Historic Landmarks which are threatened with demolition or impairment."

A \$2.7 million annual appropriation could make the vital difference between loss and preservation of dozens of National Historic Landmarks each year. The highest priority would be given to restoration and stabilization work on properties and sites as well as condition assessments, historic structures reports, architectural plans, and specifications and

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California's newest National Historic Landmark is Angel Island Immigration Station, shown here ca. 1916. Story on page 7. Historic photo from the Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, San Francisco District, General Correspondence (12030/24-2). Courtesy of the National Archives, Pacific Sierra Region, San Bruno, California.

NHL Stewards Hold First Congress

**by Bill Bolger, Susan Escherich,
Jacqui Handly, and Lisa
Kolakowsky**

Owners and managers of National Historic Landmarks from throughout the Northeast gathered for the first National Historic Landmark Stewards' Congress, November 5-7, 1997 in West Point, New York. The meet-

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NPS Follow-Up on Stewards' Congress

by Susan Escherich

The NPS NHL Assistance Program will be taking a number of actions at the national level to meet requests for assistance made by owners who returned the NHL Stewards' Survey and who attended the National Historic Landmarks Stewards' Congress held at West Point in November, 1997.

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A Word from the Associate Director

National Historic Landmarks Network

Published by the National Park Service

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*Mission of the National Park Service.
The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the
natural and cultural resources and values of the
National Park System for the enjoyment, education,
and inspiration, of this and future generations. The
Service cooperates with partners to extend the bene-
fits of natural and cultural resources conservation
and outdoor recreation throughout this country and
the world. -National Leadership Council*

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U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Cultural Resources

by Katherine H. Stevenson

Welcome to the premier issue of *National Historic Landmarks Network*, the National Historic Landmarks program newsletter. It represents the fulfillment of one of the promises made at the NHL Stewards' Congress at West Point last November to improve communication with and among NHL owners and friends. We hope that all who read it will find it to be entertaining, informative, and inspiring.

In this issue, individuals from across the country have written articles that focus on NHL preservation activities within their communities or regions. The common theme of these articles is the partnership that exists between the National Park Service and the stewards who are on the front line in the endeavor to preserve, maintain, and showcase these nationally significant historic properties that are in their care. The NPS is proud of the role it plays in this relationship and will do whatever is necessary to ensure that it provides the highest level of service to its constituents.

Of course, the major reason why we are engaged in this joint enterprise is because of the compelling stories that these properties impart to the public. The significance of these properties is what ties each to the narrative of national history.

Future issues of this newsletter will cover in greater detail the efforts of the NPS, other government agencies, professionals, and individuals who are working on nominating new properties as National Historic Landmarks. The NPS provides technical and administrative information on the designation process, oversees the development of thematic studies that are based on an understanding of broad national themes, and shepherds new NHL nominations through the designation process.

In subsequent issues of this publication, it is our hope that the stewards and friends themselves will become more involved in the production of the newsletter by suggesting issues or topics that they would like to see covered, or by contributing articles that convey the joys and frustrations, successes, and failures they experience as stewards of the nation's most significant cultural resources.

Katherine H. Stevenson is the
Associate Director, Cultural Resource
Stewardship and Partnerships, National Park Service.

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ATLANTA

The Savannah Survey: A Cooperative Undertaking

by Hector M. Abreu-Cintrón

Since 1994, the Savannah College of Art and Design's (SCAD) Historic Preservation Department has been carrying out an intensive building-by-building survey to better understand the nature of the historic resources within the National Historic Landmark District of Savannah, Georgia. This multi-year commitment of the faculty and students of SCAD, with guidance from the National Park Service's National Register Programs Division in Atlanta, has produced a rich and extensive database of over 1,500 Georgia State Site Survey Forms for future preservation planning and interpretive purposes. It has also provided the students of SCAD's Historic Preservation Department with the unique experience of making a real contribution to the nation's heritage and resources.

The city of Savannah is one of the loveliest historic cities in the United States. A jewel in the Southern crown, it is sited on the bluffs above the Savannah River of coastal Georgia. Savannah's history starts in 1733, when General James Oglethorpe founded the city. It was Oglethorpe's design for the city plan that would forever mark the shape of Savannah. He established a geometric grid of squares surrounded by equidistant streets. These squares were uniformly distributed among the city streets, creating a series of open green spaces for public enjoyment and use.

Many theories abound related to their actual use. There are

those who theorize that the squares were for defensive purposes; the local militia could gather at them during attack thus dispersing the forces equally throughout the city. Others felt that the squares were social gathering places needed to create a sense of communing with nature. Whatever the reasons for Oglethorpe's use of the squares, they have created the unique cityscape of Savannah.

Sited throughout this singular city are over 1,000 historically and architecturally significant structures dating from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries. Buildings of such varied styles as Queen Anne, Regency, Italianate, Greek Revival, Neoclassical, and examples of colonial building are to be found throughout the historic district. Of the peak number of 24 squares, 21 still are in existence, and many of the squares and cross streets contain numerous public monuments and stately live oaks festooned

with Spanish moss, giving these public spaces a special feeling of history and rest. This rich architectural and urban heritage of Savannah is unsurpassed in the United States.

In recognition of the significance of the downtown area of Savannah, the Secretary of the Interior designated the Savannah Historic District a National Historic Landmark (NHL) on November 13, 1966. The boundary description for the district, in keeping with NHL studies of the time, succinctly stated that it was, "bounded on the north by the south bank of the Savannah River, on the east by East Broad Street, on the south by Gwinnett Street, and on the west by West Broad Street" (today called Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard).

While the above boundaries follow Oglethorpe's original city layout, the description of the incredible architectural treasures sited within the district received only minimal discussion:



This view illustrates the recent restoration of the cast-iron balcony on the Owens-Thomas House, a National Historic Landmark property within the Savannah Historic District. The comprehensive survey of historic properties within the district is the first step in the Savannah College of Art and Design and the National Park Service's effort to revise the NHL district nomination. Photo by Mark R. Barnes, National Park Service.

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The present historic district encompasses approximately two square miles and contains about 1,100 noteworthy buildings. Architectural styles represented are Georgian, Federal, English Regency, Greek Revival, Italian villa, Gothic Revival, and several examples of row houses. Building materials most commonly used were wood, gray brick, and stucco on brick.

The statement of significance for the NHL district emphasized the town plan, with little space given to the discussion of the architectural significance of the buildings sitting on the cityscape. With no understanding of which buildings would be considered “contributing” to the national significance of the district, Section 106 cases repeatedly caused problems for planners simply because there did not exist a complete architectural database for the city to aid in decision-making.

With this situation in mind, SCAD, through coordination with the National Park Service, the Historic Preservation Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and the City of Savannah embarked on the daunting task of reassessing every single building and structure within the NHL district. The Historic Preservation Department of SCAD used the students in its Preservation Research and Survey course to undertake this survey. The goals of the course are to provide the student with a solid, working knowledge of the resources available for preservation research as well as a firm understanding of the various approaches that can be taken regarding the research and survey of historic resources. It seemed only logical that a coordinated

survey effort would evolve that would benefit students and preservation agencies. As part of their course work, the students proceeded to survey every single building and structure within the NHL district. The State of Georgia’s computerized State Site Survey Forms were used and filled out using the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office’s (SHPO) guidelines. Students photographed every building in the district—even the noncontributing ones—and prepared documentation relating to the architectural styles, dates of construction, and contributing significance to the district.

To assist the SCAD faculty in this endeavor, the Georgia SHPO provided grant funds that enhanced the survey work. These funds were used to pay for entering the students’ data into the SHPO’s computer database for over 750 buildings. Another 750 buildings have been surveyed and await entering into the database.

Dozens of SCAD students have participated in this survey over the last three years, along with more than a few faculty members, including this writer, who have helped to achieve the project goal. All of the participants should be commended. It is expected that the entire district, with well over 1,500 historic buildings, will be finally surveyed by early 1998. This information will be shared with the Georgia SHPO to assist in Section 106 activities, with the city of Savannah to enhance its planning capabilities, and with the NPS to revise the existing NHL nomination form. It is hoped that this information will greatly assist the city, state, and nation in better interpreting and preserving the historic resources of the city of Savannah. The Savannah survey is a great example of how

a community college can really contribute to the betterment of its native city. SCAD and Savannah go hand in hand; the students will forever feel that they, in some small way, have contributed to their adopted home.

Hector Abreu is a Professor of Historic Preservation at the Savannah College of Art and Design.

Preservation of Stallings Island Site

by Mark Barnes

The Stallings Island Site is located on an island in the middle of the Savannah River, a few miles above Augusta, Georgia. Designated in January, 1961, it was one of the first Late Archaic sites (ca. 1200 BC) to be recognized by the Secretary of the Interior as a National Historic Landmark.

Stallings Island was occupied in the transitional Late Archaic/Early Woodland periods between the end of hunting and gathering societies and the beginning of settled village life in the prehistoric Southeast. It has the potential to offer researchers insights into this important transition in prehistoric culture. The site was famous among southeastern researchers for having produced some of the earliest examples of Native American ceramics in North America.

The isolation of Stallings Island in the middle of the Savannah River did not, however, prevent it from being the object of looters. For over ten years, this site was listed in the Secretary of the Interior’s *Report to Congress on Endangered and Threatened National Historic Landmarks*.

Recently, the Archeological

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Conservancy acquired the island by donation from the private landowner, Mr. Wyck Knox, of Augusta. The Conservancy has developed a long-range management plan for the stabilization, protection, and study of the Stallings Island Site.

The Stallings Island Site and its nationally significant resources are now going to be preserved for the future. The Atlanta office of the National Park Service is recommending the award of Certificates of Appreciation, signed by the Director of the National Park Service, for the individuals and organizations involved in the preservation of this NHL.

Mark Barnes is Senior Archeologist, National Register Programs Division, Southeast Regional Office, National Park Service.

DENVER

Fair Park's Prospects Rise

by Thomas G. Keohan

When Fair Park opened in June 1936 as the Texas Centennial Exposition, it was not only a celebration of Texas independence, but also a festival of art and architecture.

Designed by George Dahl in the Art Deco style, the geometric crispness of the 30 buildings combined with grand plazas and vistas of informal plantings and winding paths made Fair Park one of America's best-planned parks. Fair Park also contained the largest collection of public art in Texas. It included painted

murals, sculpture, and bas reliefs, all of which served to reinforce the monumentality of the buildings and landscape.

The intact 30-structure complex constitutes the largest grouping of Exposition buildings and public art remaining in the United States. Because of its exceptional significance in American history, Fair Park was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1986. Fair Park was first listed in the Secretary of the Interior's *Report to Congress on Endangered and Threatened NHLs* in 1987, as many of the buildings remained underutilized, and both art and architecture suffered from poor maintenance and deterioration. Most of the murals had been painted over and many of the buildings suffered leaking roofs, damaged plaster, and faulty electrical wiring. Estimated costs for repairs exceeded the City of



This view of the Administration Building at Fair Park, ca. 1936, illustrates the elaborate art and landscaping and is indicative of the work which characterized the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition.

Historic photo courtesy of the Intermountain Support Office—Santa Fe, National Park Service.